ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

24/ 461 As these crops become ready for harvesting, the annual cycle of agricultural activities comes very near to completion. When the harvesting is over, the farmers get a brief spell of rest and leisure. Now and then they go round the fields and remove the weeds and other wild plants. Their work during this part of the year does not necessitate hard manual labour. In a leisurely way they take in hand activities of a preparatory nature which are a prelude to their major agricultural work of the rainy season and winter. Manure from cow-dung pits is carried to the fields and is evenly spread there. Grass and other wild plants growing in the fields are removed. The land is kept ready for ploughing in a month's time. In a few days the signs of approaching rains compel them to cast off their lethargy. The preparations for ploughing inaugurate a new circle of annual agricultural activities, and the advent of late summer rains sends them back once again into the fields.

4. CATTLE AND DOMESTIC ANIMALS

[241] 231 Agriculture in the village still largely follows the age-old pattern. Even to-day old style bullock-drawn wooden ploughs are used by the agriculturists. In such a system the value of draught cattle is very great indeed, for efficient farming under these conditions depends to a very great extent upon the availability of good bullocks. Some agriculturists use male buffaloes for ploughing the fields, but bullocks continue to be their favourites. Cows and she-buffaloes are kept for milk. The shepherds keep large herds of goats and sheep. Some Muslims as well as Hindus, with the exception of the Brahmins and the Komtis, may also keep a few goats. Pigs are kept only by the Erkalas. Among domestic pets, dogs are popular with every section of the village population. The number of cats in the village is fairly large, but they are not kept as pets. Some people keep parrots in cages, and teach them to utter a few words. Three Muslims have domesticated partridges. A Hindu shopkeeper has a tiny blackbird in a cage hanging in front of his shop. Poultry is kept by all sections of the village population, except the Brahmins and the Komtis. In addition to the usual fowls, four families have ducks and turkeys also.

In connection with this study a survey of village animals was undertaken in May 1951. The result of the survey is summarized in the following tables:

LEVELS OF LIVING

883 [585] themselves to work. The major responsibility rests on the adults and the middle-aged people, and here the social status of the persons concerned will determine the type of work to be done by them.

461 566 This brings us to social status as a determinant in the division of work in the community. The rich and influential people will not do anything which is regarded as humble or is otherwise classed as menial work. The men on this level generally 'plan and supervise', but the hard manual labour is done by hired labourers. They go to their fields, but only stand in a corner and instruct the servants. They will never be seen taking their plough and the bullocks to the field, or even participating in ploughing or sowing. The popular conception regarding women at this level is 'they sit in their homes loaded with gold and silver, whiling away their time chewing betel leaves and areca nuts.' However, even in these homes, women are never idle, for they have to do the cooking and look after the children. But considerations of respectability prevent them from doing several things which their counterparts in the lower strata of society regard as their normal day-to-day work. They can never be seen going to their fields, carrying headloads, drawing water from public wells, or washing clothes in public places. In fact they do not have to do any work outside their homes and are not expected to earn for the upkeep of the [562] family. The rich Muslim women observe *purdah*, i.e. they never go out of their house without a veil, and considerations of respectability demand that their sphere of activity should strictly be confined to their houses. The situation is materially different in the case of the 'well-to-do' families, but no generalizations can be made regarding this level as a unit, as the social ideals and standards of different castes differ very widely. In general, however, it may be said that the Brahmin and the Komti, being higher castes and respected people in the village, more or less follow the ideals of the rich and refrain from doing heavy manual labour as well as from all other work traditionally regarded as inferior. This is true also of the Muslims on this level who, because of their urban conceptions of middle-class respectability, think it below their dignity to do any inferior work publicly. The women from the above three groups seek to emulate the examples of the women in rich families. But in the other well-to-do families belonging to the agricultural and occupational castes notions of respectability

1 [FOR WORKING. --ANALYST]

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17
Muslims

relating to work are different. Among them also, labourers are hired for heavy manual labour, such as carrying loads; but menfolk do not object to ploughing their own fields, nor avoid out-of-door work. Of course, the women mainly look after the management of their household affairs and are never expected to earn for the family's support.

The conditions on the two lower levels are more or less similar to one another. Unlike the two upper levels, the menfolk from these groups can be compelled to do government work on a nominal payment. They do most of their work with the assistance provided by the members of the family itself. Even when labourers are engaged by the 'average' people, members of the family continue to work side by side with hired men and women. On both these levels women have comparatively greater freedom. They work out of doors, assist the menfolk in their agricultural activities and crafts, and go out for marketing. Women from 'average' families work mostly in their own homes and in family fields, but during the busy agricultural season they can work for wages as well. This is not regarded as derogatory in any sense. In the poor families, on the other hand, women have to work very hard for, besides doing their quota of work in the running of the home and assisting the husband in agriculture and caste occupation, they have to accept occasional work for wages. Among some of the lower castes, women are expected to work and earn for the upkeep of the family.

4. DIET

The standard of living of a family is judged very often from the quality and quantity of its food. In describing the status and standard of a family, people generally say 'they eat well', 'they live somehow, eating the little that they can grow' or 'they live like animals, eating even wild leaves, flowers and roots'. However, the basic diet of the people consists of rice, millets, lentils, meat and fish. The difference in standards of living is judged by the quantity and kind of rice eaten, the frequency of meat intake in the diet and by the use of spices, fats and oils, jaggery and sugar in the food. Green and powdered red chillies are used by all classes of people in considerable quantities. Vegetables are grown in the backyards during the rainy season, and eaten when ready. When